DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 098 340 CE 002 420

AUTHOR	Miller, Mason E.
TITLE	Extension Study Group Members View Their Clubs and Extension Home Economists. ANREI Publication No. 28.
INSTITUTION	Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. Coll. of Agriculture and Natural Resources Education Inst.
REPORT NO	ANREI-28
PUB DATE	Oct 73
NOTE	10p.; For a related document, see CE 002 421
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	Classes (Groups of Students); *Discussion Groups; Extension Agents; *Extension Education; *Home Economics Education; *Participant Satisfaction; Surveys; *University Extension
IDENTIFIERS	*Michigan

ABSTRACT

The data presented in this report were selected from a 1972 study of Michigan Extension Study Group (ESG) members. Included are data descriptive of the women themselves and their situation (area and type of home, age, income, ESG experience, and especially their attitudes toward their ESG and their Extension Home Economists). Selected findings are presented in tabular form, showing proportions of responses from each of three areas of the State; members' feelings about their ESGs; and each respondent's level of satisfaction with her ESG. Other tables give percentages of respondents who would like to see changes made in their ESGs; how members feel about their Extension Home Economist's help to the ESG; the positive and negative reasons respondents answered as they did when asked how adequate the help was that EHEs gave to their ESGs; and a breakdown of the EHEs most important activities for the respondent and community. Major conclusions were: (1) most respondents said they were satisfied with their ESGs; (2) ESGs were important to them; (3) there were things that ESGs could do differently; (4) help from Extension Home Economists was adequate; and (5) members do pass on information and ideas to others. (NH)

ANREI Publication No. 28 October, 1973

ED 098340

EXTENSION STUDY GROUP MEMBERS VIEW THEIR CLUBS AND EXTENSION HOME ECONOMISTS

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

by Mason E. Miller*

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This is a report of selected data from a 1972 study of Michigan Extension Study Group members for presentation to the Michigan Association of Extension Home Economists during Extension Annual Conference, 1973.

During 1971-72, Michigan Cooperative Extension Service Home Economists in the upper part of the lower peninsula of Michigan served as the Research Committee for their Michigan Association of Extension Home Economists.

Michigan Cooperative Extension Service Home Economists serving on the MAEHE Research Committee when it started working on this project were: Bonnie M. Hamlin, Chairperson, Julia Beard, Mary Luttinen, Merrily Baldwin, Martha Martin, and Susan Smalley. At the completion of the project, the group consisted of: Bonnie M. Hamlin, Chairperson, Kristin Sorgenfrei, Corrine Hahn, Julia Beard, Mary Luttinen Pierce, Merrily Baldwin, Sharon Fritz, and Helen Meach.

That Research Committee wanted to take a look at the Michigan Extension Study Groups (ESGs) and received permission from the MAEHE to go ahead with such a study. They approached the author for help. Together, the Committee and the author developed the questionnaire and procedures eventually used.

The final questionnaire was distributed to Extension Home Economists in late May and early June 1972. County mailing lists for the Michigan Association of Extension Homemakers were used to draw the sample. These

---

*Associate Professor, Extension Communication and Training, Education Institute, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Michigan State University, East Lansing.

CE002420

were the official 1971-72 lists of those who had paid dues to the organization. They included 15,853 women. The systematic random sample was 573 women--approximately 3.6 percent of the total membership.

TABLE 1. Percentage of Questionnaires Returned, by Family Living Education Areas.

Area	%return	Area	%return
1	48	17	60
2	57	18	100
3	57	19	24
4	51	20	40
5	30	21	60
6	34	22	40
7	48	23	20
8	40	24	60
9	57	25	40
10	46	26	60
11	46	27	50
12	53	28	50
13	26	29	50
14	47	30	50
15	33	31	91
16	50		

Our hope had been to get high enough return so that we could generalize from these data to the state as a whole. Returns were disappointing in that regard. The data from this study must be taken as representative of this group of respondents only. However, the sample is distributed across the state and so is broad in that sense.

DATA GATHERED

We gathered information descriptive of the women themselves and their situation:

1. the area of the state they lived in--upper peninsula, upper-lower peninsula, lower-lower peninsula
2. home location--rural or urban
3. age

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

4. annual family income
5. number of formal organizations belonged to
6. number of years they had been ESG members
7. number of members in their ESGs

Then they were asked to respond to a number of items concerning their ESGs, their attitudes toward those ESGs, and their beliefs as to what makes ESGs appealing or not appealing to women:

1. importance of the ESG for them
2. level of satisfaction with their ESG
3. whether or not they would like to see ESGs doing something different, and then specific changes they'd like to see made in ESGs
4. the adequacy of the help from the EHE to the ESG, and why they saw it that way
5. their perception of what the EHEs do, and their ratings of what those activities is most important for them personally, and for their community
6. whether or not they "reteach" what they learn in ESG to others, to whom, and how
7. the most important thing about ESGs for them
8. why women join ESGs, why they don't, and why they drop out

SELECTED FINDINGS

Similar proportions of responses came from each of the three areas of the state.

TABLE 2. Areas of the State Respondents Lived in

Area	Number of Questionnaires Sent out	Number of Respondents	% Responses are of Questionnaires Distributed
Upper Peninsula	70	32	45
Upper-Lower Peninsula	115	53	46
Lower-Lower Peninsula	388	194	50
Total	573	279	48

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

How Members Feel About ESGs

We asked the ESG members what was the most important thing for them about their ESG.

TABLE 3. For You, What is the Most Important Thing About Your ESG?

	%
Learning, keeping up to date	47
Fellowship, socializing	37
Exchange of ideas	7
Helping others together	2
Being leader, presenting lessons	1
Other	6
Total	100
	N=248

Both learning and socializing ranked high. Together they represent 84 percent of the responses. The focus on learning make ESGs different from most other women's groups. At the same time, that learning must be done in an atmosphere that allows for fellowship and socializing.

Next we looked at the women's satisfaction with their ESG.

TABLE 4. Respondent's Level of Satisfaction With Her ESG

	%
Dissatisfied	4.8
Somewhat dissatisfied	18.3
Neither	1.8
Somewhat satisfied	36.6
Satisfied	38.5
Total	100.0
	N=273

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Clearly the respondents weren't neutral! They had opinions--mostly on the satisfied side, with over 75 percent marking "somewhat satisfied" or "satisfied." Throwing "neither" in with the two "dissatisfied" categories, and combining the two "satisfied" categories, gave 68 "dissatisfied" responses vs. 205 "satisfied"--a highly significant difference (x^2=68.76, 1 df, <.001).

At the same time they were expressing general satisfaction, the women definitely wanted their ESGs to be different. We asked, "Would you like to see your ESG doing something different from what it does now?" The responses were:

	%
Yes	63
No	37
Total	100

(x^2=15.81, df, <.001, N=251)

TABLE 5. Changes Respondents Would Like to See Made in Their ESGs

	%
Offering of crafts and skills	41
Improvement of lessons, make them more interesting, better leading and teaching	30
More community involvement and subject matter--reach more people, be more practical, reach those who need help, better public relations	11
New lessons--have had the old ones, needs of specific audiences like the elderly are neglected, young homemaker overemphasized, more personal enrichment needed	6
Members become more active	3
Generally satisfied - no specific recommendations	3
Other	6
Total	100

N=173

Of those responding to this question, over 40 percent wanted ESG offerings in crafts and skills. Over 30 percent of the comments had to do

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

with lessons--improving them, getting new lessons, meeting the needs of more specific audiences with the lessons.

How Members Feel About Their Extension Home Economists

TABLE 6. Adequacy of Extension Home Economist's Help to ESG

		%
Very adequate	1	41
	2	17
	3	20
	4	10
Very inadequate	5	12
Total		100

N=265

Combining categories 1 and 2 gives 58 percent "adequate" responses; and combining categories 3, 4, and 5--to be conservative--gives 42 percent "inadequate" responses. There are significantly more "adequate" responses (x^2=5.74, 1 df, .02). Forty-one percent said their EHE's help was "very adequate".

We next asked them why they thought the Extension Home Economist's help their ESG was adequate or not.

TABLE 7. Reasons Respondents Answered the Way they did when Asked How Adequate the Help was the EHE gave their ESG

	%
Positive Reasons	
EHE is capable, helpful, good planner, provides good information	50.8
Interesting, useful, relevant lessons	9.7
EHE shows enthusiasm, has pleasing personality	6.3
Other positive	5.4
Negative Reasons	
Poor job done by EHE	9.3
Time and area limitations of EHE	6.3
Lessons not pertinent	4.2
Lack of interest from group members	3.0
Old lessons repeated	.8
Other negative	4.2
Total	100.0

N=235

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Over 70 percent of the responses were favorable to the help given by the Extension Home Economist. Over 50 percent were comments relating to the expertise and competence of the Extension Home Economist. Over 6 percent were comments relating to her personality and spirit.

We were interested in what ESG members thought an Extension Home Economist did. Sometimes to the Extension Home Economist involved, it seems as if ESG members think they have their job just so they can serve the ESGs! We asked respondents to mark a checklist of activities they thought Extension Home Economists might do. Then we asked them to indicate which one of those activities was (1) most important to the respondent, and (2) most important to her community--from her point of view.

TABLE 8. What Does an EHE Do? What's Her Most Important Activity for You, Your Community?

		% of Those Responding to These Items	
EHE Activity Checklist	Does	Most Important for You	Most Important for Community
	%		
Plan lessons for ESGs	94	35	7
Provide answers to homemakers' questions	92	26	9
Provides consumer information	90	30	18
Cooperates with other agencies and community groups	86	4	25
Does radio, tv programs, newspaper articles	85	3	22
Keeps herself up to date professionally	84	8	3
Provides resource people for local programs	68	6	6
Assists families who have limited resources	67	10	18
Train 4-H leaders	61	3	16
Organizes programs for all family members	47	8	10

N=279

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

All activity items except one were checked by over 50 percent of the respondents. Thus ESG members responding seem to have a pretty good idea of the multitude of obligations an EHE has.

The "most important for you" items ranked very much like the "what an EHE does" list. The major exception was that they ranked her doing radio and tv and newspaper articles and "cooperates with other agencies", considerably down the list as "important to you."

Cooperating with other agencies and community groups, providing consumer information, doing mass media work, and assisting families who have limited resources were ranked highest of the EHE activities "important to the community."

Although 84 percent thought the EHE kept herself up to date professionally as one of her activities, very few selected that item as the most important one for the respondents or for the community. This is not evidence that that activity is not important, but rather that these respondents saw other activities as more directly pertinent to them and their communities.

The respondents also rated "provides resource people for local programs" low in importance to them and to their communities. It is now known for sure whether or not they were thinking of their own ESG programs when answering. However, they put such EHE activities far down the line.

Do Members Help Diffuse New Ideas and Information?

We were interested in whether or not ESG members take part in a "two-step flow" of information--from the lessons in the club to them, and from them to others. This model of the diffusion of information and influence through information is well-known in the diffusion research literature (2). Was it at work in the ESGs? Definitely, from the response of these women.

TABLE 9. Do You Formally or Informally "Teach" Others What You Learn From Your ESG Lessons?

	%
Yes	83
No	17
Total	100

x^2=115.58, 1 df, .001. N=268

We next asked just who they taught.

TABLE 10. Who Do You "Teach" ESG Lesson Material To?

	%
Friends	67
Relatives	61
Formal Contacts and appearances	5
Co-workers	1
Clients	1
Others	5
Total	100

(More than one answer possible. N=277.)

Friends and relatives were far and away the most usual recipients of the information passed on by ESG members reporting.

Finally, we asked just how they passed on the information from the ESG lessons to those they "taught."

TABLE 11. Major Ways You Teach ESG Materials to Others

	%
Tell, show, advise	83
Show bulletins, materials	5
Do a project	2
Formal presentations—speeches, lessons, before groups	2
Invite people to ESG meetings	1
Other	7
Total	100

(More than one answer possible. N=159.)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Most "teaching" done by ESG members takes the form of informal contracts with friends and relatives, to whom they talk about what they have learned.

CONCLUSION

Most of these respondents, then, said they were satisfied with their ESGs, the ESGs were important to them, and that there were things they'd like to see the ESGs do different. They also thought the EHE's help to them was adequate, and that she was a competent and capable and pleasing person. They seemed to have a fairly good grasp of the multitude of responsibilities their EHE has.

Finally, they do pass on information and ideas to others--thus helping the EHE in her job of diffusing this kind of educational material to others.